

The Great Parade

Wera never really slept well, so it wasn't hard for her to get up early in the morning. It was barely dawn when she was soaking her old parts in the Car Wash. She liked to clean herself leisurely, because this was her time and nobody could bother her. She couldn't hear the urging of the others from the outside, saying "hurry up already, we would like to get ourselves washed as well", and she had enough time to dry her mirrors thoroughly and shine her hubcaps.

This day she also finished early, as Wriggle Town was preparing for the Clean Day Parade. Although she was polishing her bumpers for a little longer than usual, she made sure to wake up the other garbage trucks on time so they wouldn't be late for the celebration.

"Wake up sleepyheads! Rise and shine!" the garage door opened wide, and Wera's cheerful voice filled the room.

"I don't want to get up!" Wilma's sleepy mutter came from one of the corners. "This is cruelty!" she continued to complain as she saw that Wera, the old water truck, was pulling up the shades on the windows without any mercy. The trucks of Waste Works Yard squinted as they started opening their headlights.

"I am so tired!" Walter groaned. "Let me sleep a little longer!"

"We worked a great deal yesterday; we truly deserve a little more rest!" Waldemar's voice was also groggy.

"There is no way!" Wera answered strictly. "It is already past seven o'clock! You still have to clean yourselves up, and today we cannot be a minute late. We cannot miss the parade!"

Wanda's headlights opened wide as soon as she heard what time it was.

"Goodness gracious! How will I be able to get ready in time? Wilma, please help!" she begged the little street sweeper.

Waldemar looked out through the garage window hopefully.

"Thank goodness the weather is nice," he said happily. "We are in luck! Everything sparkles more in the sunshine, and the decorations for the celebration will truly shine."

"I was hoping the weather would be good, because it's not fun to have a parade in the rain. We have been lucky so far. Every year it has been sunny, and we only had to worry about not getting sunstroke," Goliath, the lanky crane truck muttered.



“Which programme are you looking forward to the most?” Wili turned to him. “Are you going to enter any of the competitions?”

“Of course,” Goliath answered, “I am going to be the winner of the nest making contest,” and as a warm-up, he started stretching his basket.

“Aren’t you afraid of the rivals?” Wera teased him. “The Mayor has invited a lot of guests; I am sure there will be somebody amongst them who can vanquish you.”

“It is out of the question,” Goliath answered, filled with self-confidence. “I have been practicing for this all year. No one can doubt that I am the best!”

“You don’t have to worry about the competition either,” Walter rolled to Wanda, who was getting ready feverishly, “you will be the most beautiful one there!”

“Thank you Walter,” Wanda blushed happily, “but I am not so sure about that. Do you know Amelia? You know, she is the little street sweeper from Windy City, the one who amazed everybody last year with the rainbow-coloured flag she pinned on her side. When I think about her, I feel like my ornaments are just boring junk.”

“Oh, it’s so good that you reminded me, Wanda! We had almost forgotten about them!” Splotch, the tiny rag doll shouted. With a big swing he opened the wardrobe door and he took out a dozen colourful flags.

Everyone received one that they fastened next to their right side rear-view mirror. Since they were finished with everything, they lined up in pairs and awaited the go-signal from Samson. He was the one to lead the procession of Wriggle Town’s garbage trucks at the Clean Day Parade.

“Let’s go already, so we won’t be late!” Wera rushed the company. “I can hardly wait to see Philip!”

”Who is Philip? Wili asked with curiosity. “I have never heard of him.”

“This just goes to show that you haven’t been very long at Waste Works Yard,” Walter chuckled. “Wera very much looks forward to the Clean Day Parade every year because she can meet her old friend there. And every year we get to hear how a long long time ago Philip saved our dear water truck when they were so young that they had only just rolled off of the conveyor belt.”

“That story cannot be told enough times!” Wera interrupted indignantly. “If Philip hadn’t push me out of the way I wouldn’t even be at the junk yard today, let alone here amongst you. That falling piece of iron would have mangled me completely. I will never



forget what he did! Ever since then he has been my best friend! It's just a shame we live so far apart from each other.”

“The delegation from Tiny Town has arrived!” Olga, the little teddy bear ran into the Garage with excitement.

“Then what are we still waiting for? Let's go!” Samson gave the order. The engines started to rev up and the garbage trucks roll out of the yard.

The residents of Wriggle Town were in complete ecstasy. Everyone, both young and old, were curious to see the Clean Day Parade since this was the only occasion when the garbage trucks of Waste Works Yard marched along Main Street together as a team, escorted by the garbage trucks from the neighbouring towns. Multitudes of people were awaiting the colourful procession along the entire length of Main Street, and when the first trucks appeared at the beginning of the road, they greeted them with a loud cheer.

The trucks of Tiny Town were decorated with yellow flags. They were honking zealously and flashing their headlights at the celebrating mass. They were followed by a convoy from Apple City with green flags, and then came the garbage trucks of Wriggle Town, rolling proudly in the procession. The delegation of Windy City had outdone themselves again. They didn't only have blue flags waving on the top of their cabins, they also decorated their mirrors with colourful ribbons.

The joyful procession halted for a moment when a blonde little boy swung into the road and started running towards one of garbage trucks from Apple Town. He was clenching a gigantic green apple in his hand and gave it to the truck with beaming eyes. The crane truck winked at him, and with his lever he cleverly took the gift and ushered the little boy back onto the pavement.

Wera didn't need to strain her headlights for long; she soon noticed a familiar blue garbage truck.

“It is so good to see you,” she greeted her colleague from Windy City. “What's new in your neighbourhood? Has anything interesting happened lately?”

“Hello, Wera! Nothing special has happened; it's business as usual for us. I know you like to hear some news but unfortunately I don't have anything exciting to tell you. And how are you?”



“I am very well, thank you for asking. I am just a little worried because I can’t see Philip anywhere. Do you know where he might be?”

“Philip? That old metal can? I haven’t seen him for ages. But I would be very surprised if he showed up. At his age it’s not customary to go to parades any more. I bet he was taken out of circulation a long time ago and is awaiting disassembly in a forgotten warehouse somewhere. Where are you going?” the Windy City garbage truck shouted after Wera with surprise.

Very few things could put off the wise old water truck from her famous tranquillity, but now she felt that if she didn’t roll away fast she would explode with anger. ‘Who does this good-for-nothing think she is? Nobody can speak about my friend like that. To take him out of circulation! Who has ever heard of such nonsense?’ As she was mumbling to herself, she headed in the direction of the target shooting competition.

At the corner of the football field four street sweeper trucks were standing in the ring of onlookers. Four trash cans were placed one hundred metres from them. Each town was represented by one truck. The task of the contestants was to fill their own bins with water. The one who did it fastest became the champion.

With loud encouragement coming from the ones standing around, the competition began, but the target shooting didn’t engage Wera at all. Instead, she was surveying the members of the audience, hoping she would notice Philip somewhere. But she couldn’t see him anywhere, so she rolled on to the nest making competition. The contest was underway and Goliath was about to fasten a used car tire onto the top of a pole. Wera sized up the other contestants with one look, and she acknowledged with a smile that next to Goliath they didn’t stand a chance of winning.

“What do you think of Goliath?” a voice asked. Wera didn’t notice that Clara, the residential garbage truck, had rolled next to her.

“He was right, no one is better than him!” she answered. “Where did you leave Malvina?”

“She is talking to a truck from Tiny Town over there,” Clara nodded in the other direction. “I found it better to leave, because they kept talking about accidents. Your friend Philip was mentioned as well.”

“And what did they say about him?” Wera asked with excitement. “He wasn’t in an accident, was he?”



“Don’t worry,” Clara tried to calm her. “The truck from Tiny Town said that Philip had slipped in a bend and landed in a ditch. Luckily nothing serious happened, only his mudguard fell off. He also said that he couldn’t get out from there on his own, so a rescue team had to be organised to lift him out. After all, he is not a young model any more!”

Wera was getting more and more restless. She rolled from one contest location to the next, but she couldn’t distract her thoughts from her old friend. When she finally stopped to organise her thoughts, the loudspeaker came on. The announcer encouraged the garbage trucks to roll to the grey tent standing at the square to have a pretty drawing made on their car-body.

“Don’t you also want to get a cool tattoo?” Wili shouted over to Wera, proudly showing the image painted on his side.

Wera waved back to him saying she didn’t want one, and she quickly turned away because she felt her windshield was fogging up. She remembered what a huge dent Philip got on his side when he saved her. The brand new truck got badly damaged when he pushed Wera out of the way of the falling piece of iron. Philip had never allowed the dent to be repaired but rather kept showing it off, and he was very proud of it. ‘This is my heroic merit,’ he kept saying jokingly.

“Goodness, Philip, where are you?” Wera sighed to herself. “I think I had better find myself a peaceful place where I can calm down. It is true that I cannot find Philip anywhere, but this doesn’t mean there is something the matter with him.”

In the meantime the Mayor stepped onto the stage in the middle of the square and spoke into the microphone.

“May I have your attention, please? Next up is the highlight of the day! Dear celebrators, you are about to witness a very important event! All of us who live in Wriggle Town, Windy City, Apple Town and Tiny Town know how much we have to thank our garbage trucks for. If they didn’t sweep up our streets, didn’t empty our garbage cans, didn’t help clean up the snow in the wintertime, weren’t on alert if there is an accident somewhere, I could go on and on about all the things they do for us, our beloved towns wouldn’t be so tidy and organised. This is why I would like to say thank you and express our recognition by establishing a new award. The leaders of the four towns have decided to create a Lifetime Achievement Award for those garbage trucks who have been working tirelessly for our towns for a long time and have carried out countless memorable deeds during their long life. Now I



will turn this over to the Mayor of Windy City, who will announce who receives the award for the first time and who will also tell us why that certain garbage truck was found suitable for the title.”

The Mayor of Windy City walked solemnly to the microphone. She smoothed her skirt a little and began.

“Greetings to all who have come today!” the cheerful voice came from the loudspeakers. “We didn’t have to mull over who should be the first one to be awarded for too long. We have all agreed that we can only reward a real hero. A truck who, since his youth, has proven to us on various occasions that he is capable of making sacrifices for others.”

The crowd began to roar, and everyone was trying to guess who the Mayor was thinking of.

‘I only know one hero like that,’ Wera mumbled to herself, ‘but he is not here right now.’

“Please give a warm welcome to Philip!” the name of the old water truck echoed from the microphone.

Wera gaped at the podium. Her friend Philip rolled onto the stage with a polished exterior and a wide smile. Cheering could be heard from everywhere, the people were shouting, the trucks were honking, and everyone was truly happy for the recognition of the dear old water truck.

Wera didn’t know how she was able to get through the celebrating crowds and how she managed to get close to Philip.

“Congratulations, you rascal! You scared me!” she smiled at him joyfully. “I have been looking for you all day. Where were you hiding?”

“The organisers meant for this to be a surprise,” Philip looked at her apologetically, “this is why they didn’t want me to appear before the award ceremony. I arrived early in the morning to Wriggle Town, before the procession had even begun. Please don’t be angry at me!”

“How could I be angry,” Wera answered airily, “when I am just so happy you are here, safe and sound!”

“Only just sound,” Philip winked at her and turned his dent proudly to the photographers.

THE END

